Whiting

Whiting, in the North Sea specifically the Whiting that is also known as Merling (*Merlangius merlangus*), is a species of fish from the Gadiformes Order (Rose, 2007; Zuk et al., 1992). Within the order of Gadiformes there are more than 500 species known, of which around 59 are described within the family of Gadidae (Zuk et al., 1992). Of the other Gadidae species, only three were identified as living in the North Sea as well (Marty et al., 2013). These are Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*), Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*), and Norway pout (*Trisopterus esmarkii*) (Marty et al., 2013). Whiting is considered to be non-migratory and native in the North Sea (Rose, 2007).

History/ Population trends

In the early 2000s, within large parts of the North Sea, several forage fish stocks simultaneously suffered from successive years of recruitment failure, coupled with decreasing stock abundances (Lauerburg et al., 2018). Whiting is a major fish predator in the North Sea ecosystem and is, according to Lauerburg et al., almost exclusively piscivorous (Lauerburg et al., 2018). Lauerburg et al. hypothesized that shortages in forage fish would lead to negative effects on growth or condition of a predator that relies on a few dominant prey fish species (Lauerburg et al., 2018). This resulted in a decrease of catches from the 2000s onwards (ICES, 2024). However, in the last couple of years, the stock size of Whiting in the North Sea has drastically improved (ICES, 2024). Interestingly, pressure from fishing has not increased and in has even been steadily decreasing during the same years (ICES, 2024).

Miscellaneous

- Whiting intestines contain bacteria that can help in the preservation of food according to Cheriet et al. (2023). Together with Gilthead seabream (*Sparus aurata*), Whiting innards may also contain probiotic substances (Cheriet et al., 2023).

Diet

- Sprat (Seyhan et al., 1998; Hislop et al., 1991)
- Sandeel (Hislop et al., 1991
- Herring (Hislop et al., 1991)
- Crustaceans (Hislop et al., 1991)
- Annelida (Hislop et al., 1991)
- Cephalopods (Hislop et al., 1991)
- Other active demersal hunters (Hislop et al., 1991)
- Other active pelagic hunters (Hislop et al., 1991)

Sources

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